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National Veterans Service Organizations and
Congressional Leaders –Walters Proposal – 02/04/1983

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

1/18/83

Morton -

→ FYI

→ Per EMIII instructions, VA request for meeting with the President was submitted through OCA. We will keep you advised on any decision and further action.

BNDunlop

214

1:30 P. M.

Allen Meyer
5004

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

SCHEDULE PROPOSAL

January 17, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR BILL SADLEIR

FROM: Craig Fuller 

SUBJECT: Meeting with leaders of National Veterans Service Organizations and Congressional Leaders of Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committees.

PURPOSE: To give the President an opportunity to reaffirm his commitment to Veterans.

BACKGROUND: The new Administrator of the Veteran's Administration, Harry N. Walters, has requested this meeting with the President to allow him to speak on behalf of all Veterans regarding a number of issues (Agent Orange, Female Veterans, Readjustment Counseling, Aging Veterans, and Veterans Employment). He plans to emphasize the need for open and honest communication between the White House, the Veterans Administration, national Veterans service organizations, and Congressional leaders.

The meeting will give the President an opportunity to reaffirm his commitment to Veterans and his support of Administrator Walters.

DATE: January DURATION: 30 minutes

LOCATION: Cabinet Room

PARTICIPANTS: National Commanders and Executive Directors of American Legion, VFW, DAV.
Senators Simpson and Cranston
Congressmen Montgomery and Hammerschmidt
Messrs. Walters and Alvarez

OUTLINE OF EVENT: Harry Walters will present his views to the President. The President will make a few comments and there will be a brief roundtable discussion.

REMARKS: Talking points will be provided.

MEDIA COVERAGE: None

PROJECT OFFICER: Craig L. Fuller



REFERENCE SLIP

| TO (Name or title—Mail routing symbol) | INITIALS—DATE |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Dee Jepsen | |
| 2. Special Assistant to the President | |
| 3. Rm. 197. Old Executive Office Building | |
| 4. Washington, DC 20500 | |
| 5. Telephone: 456-6585 | |

REASON FOR REFERENCE

- | | | |
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REMARKS

The attached is for your information.

*with best regards
Nora*

| | |
|---|---|
| FROM Dr. Nora Scott Kinzer (OOB) Special Assistant to the Administrator VA Central Office 810 Vermont Avenue, Washington, DC | DATE 2/3/83 TEL. EXT. 389-5518 |
|---|---|



Veterans
Administration

Date: February 2, 1983

To: Becky Norton Dunlop,
Special Assistant to the
President and Director,
Office of Cabinets Affairs

Memorandum

From: J. Kenneth Klinge, *JKK*
Special Assistant
to the Administrator (00C)

Subj: Meeting with Heads of Veterans
Organization with President
Friday, February 4, 1983

1. Attached, please find the following:
 - (a) Administrator Walters remarks
(See attachment A)
 - (b) Suggested topics to be covered by the
President
(See attachment B)
 - (c) Proposal for the Administrator of
Veterans Affairs to attend Cabinet
Meeting
(See attachment C)

2. If you should need additional information or additional ideas, please feel free to contact my office at 389-5522. I will be in contact with you on Thursday, February 3, 1983, at noon.

Attachment

ADMINISTRATOR WALTERS REMARKS

Mr. President:

It is an honor to be invited to this historic site to meet with you and to introduce to you the representatives of those whose sacrifices have earned them a special place in our Nation's history, America's Veterans.

In a meeting prior to your joining us, Mr. President, we have discussed my role as Advocate for Veterans Affairs -- which you charged me with at our initial meeting; the need for teamwork and open and honest communications among all concerned parties; the continuing need for adequate benefits and programs which you have generously provided for in your budget; and our collective responsibilities to address the many complex issues confronting veterans and the Veterans Administration.

Your interest and concern for veterans is well known to each of us, Mr. President. Under your leadership, with the advice and assistance of the advocates for veterans in this room today, and the good works of the people who comprise the

Veterans Administration, we look forward to accomplishing our mission of service to veterans in an even more effective and efficient manner than has been true in the past.

Since coming to the VA, I have adopted a slogan which you will hear often in the future. It is one which I am sure you will agree

"AMERICA IS NUMBER ONE, THANKS TO OUR VETERANS."

COMMITMENT TO VETERANS

- o Erroneous perception has existed during past several years that the President is not concerned about veterans or veterans issues
- o Meeting with leaders of National Veterans Service Organizations and Congressional leaders indicates the President's support for veterans and veterans issues
- o Nation's defense requires men and women who are willing to serve in our Armed Forces and the nation must never forget those men and women who served their country in time of need
- o The nation owes a special debt to veterans who have become disabled while serving their country and a special debt to the dependents of veterans who died while serving their country
- o The VA's proposed FY 1984 Budget represents a strong statement of support for veterans
 - The total requested for FY 1984 is \$26.1 billion which represents a \$1.1 billion increase over FY 1983
 - The FY 1984 Budget will provide \$10.1 billion in compensation payments to 2.3 million veterans with service-connected disabilities and 348,000 survivors of veterans who died of service-connected causes
 - The FY 1984 Budget provides for \$3.8 billion in pension payments to 775,000 wartime veterans and 885,000 survivors of wartime veterans
 - Funding for VA's Medical Care Program will be increased by more than \$383 million
 - VA's FY 1984 Construction program will increase by \$319 million to \$868 million, and includes plans for a 725 bed replacement hospital in Minneapolis

RECOGNITION OF THE SERVICE PROVIDED BY NATIONAL VETERANS
SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

- o Every President since the VA was established as an independent agency in 1930 has recognized and praised the aims and objectives, as well as the accomplishments, of National Veterans Organizations
- o Veterans Organizations are patriotic groups of veterans dedicated to advancing the ideals of America
- o Veterans Organizations are comprised of veterans who are dedicated to the rehabilitation and welfare of veterans and the welfare of their dependents
- o Veterans Organizations are made up of professional, business and civic leaders who, in their communities, volunteer their time, energy and resources on behalf of their fellow veterans
- o The American Legion has approximately 2.6 million members
- o The Veterans of Foreign Wars has approximately 1.9 million members
- o The Disabled American Veterans Organization has approximately 700,000 members
- o Every major Veterans Organization has a "Service Program" which has the specific purpose of providing information and assistance to individual veterans. Service officers and accredited representatives serve individual veterans at home, in VA medical care facilities, at VA regional offices and in their communities. Thousands of America's veterans look to Veterans Service Organizations for guidance, understanding and assistance

CONCERN FOR THE NEEDS OF WOMEN VETERANS

- o The President and Mr. Walters met prior to Mr. Walters' confirmation hearing and discussed the issue of women veterans and the need for the VA to recognize the special concerns of women veterans
- o Mr. Walters has stated he will be an advocate for all of America's veterans and this included women veterans
- o Mr. Walters has appointed a Special Assistant on his immediate staff who will be the VA's focal point on women's issues
- o Mr. Walters has also instituted action to establish a Federal Advisory Committee on Women Veterans

PROPOSAL FOR THE
ADMINISTRATOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
TO ATTEND CABINET MEETINGS

BACKGROUND:

- o On October 10, 1978, President Carter accorded the Veterans Administration the status of a Cabinet agency for the sole purpose of regularly attending meetings of the President's Cabinet at the White House. (Attachment 1) This action, although largely symbolic, underscored the President's respect and support for this nation's approximately 30 million veterans.
- o During his term as Administrator of Veterans Affairs, Mr. Nimmo was not invited to attend Cabinet meetings. The result was a general perception among Veterans Service Organizations, some members of Congress, and many veterans that the President was unconcerned about veterans and that the previous Administrator of Veterans Affairs had little or no access to the President or his top officials.
- o During the past several years, several members of Congress have expressed support for having the Veterans Administration accorded the permanent status of a Cabinet Department.
- o National Veterans Service Organizations, including the Disabled American Veterans, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Paralyzed Veterans of America, have expressed support for the elevation of the Veterans Administration to Cabinet status.

DISCUSSION:

- o The Administrator of Veterans Affairs heads the largest independent Agency in the Federal government and employs more employees than any other Federal Agency except the Department of Defense.
- o Veterans, their dependents and survivors comprise nearly 50% of the population of this country and the programs of the Veterans Administration range from one of the largest health care and medical systems in the world to a multi-billion dollar compensation and pension program; from G.I. housing and home loans to burial benefits and the National Cemetery System; and from the largest and most successful student assistance program to a multi-billion dollar insurance system.

- o The programs of the VA require extensive coordination with other Federal Agencies in order to assure the best quality delivery of services to this nation's veterans.
- o The attendance of the Administrator of Veterans Affairs at the President's Cabinet meetings would accomplish the following goals:
 - Provide a visible and positive statement of the President's interest in, and concern for, veterans and veterans issues
 - Provide a positive statement of support for the new Administrator of Veterans Affairs in an effort to ease national Veterans Service Organization concerns that the Administrator of Veterans Affairs does not have access to the President or other top officials
 - Promote an awareness of the need to have greater coordination and cooperation of all Federal Agencies which have programs affecting veterans

RECOMMENDATION:

- o The President invite the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to participate in the President's Cabinet meetings.

X THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 10, 1978

To Administrator Max Cleland

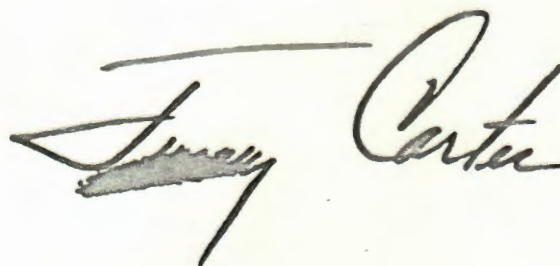
I am inviting you to attend my bi-weekly Cabinet meetings.

As head of the largest independent agency in the Federal Government, you employ more personnel (over 230,000) than any other Federal agency except the Department of Defense.

As you know, Veterans and their dependents and survivors comprise nearly 50% of the population of this country; your programs affect nearly every family in the United States. Your programs range from the largest health care and medical system in the world to a multi-billion compensation and pension program; from G.I. housing and home loans to burial benefits and the National Cemetery System; and from the largest and most successful student assistance program to a multi-billion dollar insurance system.

Your presence at Cabinet meetings will be useful for other departments with overlapping responsibilities, for the Veterans Administration, and for benefitting Veterans themselves. I look forward to your participation at these bi-weekly meetings.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Max Cleland
Administrator of Veterans Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20420

max.
T/T
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file 10/10/78
N. A. W.